

BRIEFLY



Valentin Koupny, chief of the 'Sarcophage' the concrete sealing of the Block 4 of the infamous Chernobyl nuclear power plant - wipes away some sweat during his speech on the specification of the concrete sealing object given at an international scientific practical conference, in Ukraine on Friday, which was devoted to the ninth anniversary of the sarcophage's erection in 1986. The difficult economic situation of the Ukraine currently would not allow to finance another one billion US dollars for the construction of an additional sealing of Block 4, called 'Cover Object-2', Koupny said.

— AFP/UNB photo

King Fahd in good condition:

Saudi Arabian King Fahd, in hospital for tests, apparently suffered a fainting spell but the diabetic monarch is now in good condition and receiving well-wishers, sources in the kingdom said on Sunday, Reuter reports from Dubai.

"There is no panic or concern... his majesty (had) suffered a bit of fainting," one source said. The royal court on Thursday announced that the 73-year-old king had been admitted to hospital triggering rumours about his condition.

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AMMAN, Dec 3: Jordan on Saturday signed a wide ranging defence cooperation accord with France and asked for upgrading of its ageing Mirage plane fleet, officials said, reports Reuter.

"We will hold joint military exercises, and the Jordanian prime minister emphasised the offer for the French forces to hold joint exercises in Jordan," said Millon.

Millon said a team of French defence experts would examine Jordan's weapons needs, including fighter planes, in the coming weeks.

Jordanian officials said Bin Shaker asked Millon for upgrading of Jordan's fleet of 31 Mirage F-1 fighter planes. Modernising the fleet, which is outclassed by all Jordan's rivals in the region, is a top priority for King Hussein.

The pace covers supply of armaments and contains a separate protocol on joint military exercises.

— AFP/UNB photo

Lankan troops begin mopping up pockets of Tigers' resistance

COLOMBO, Dec 3: Hundreds of Sri Lankan troops today began mopping up pockets of rebel resistance after taking control of the Tamil guerilla bastion of Jaffna in the island's north the military said, reports AFP.

Infantry soldiers on Saturday captured the former Jaffna Fort, giving them overall control of the town which had been the capital of a de facto state run by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) since 1990.

"A clearing operation is now underway," a military spokesman here said. "There is no escape for the Tigers trapped inside the town, we will take care of them one by one."

At least three soldiers were killed overnight by LTTE snipers holding out in houses and buildings, the spokesman said.

He said thousands of soldiers sealed off Jaffna on Saturday, the 47th day of Sri Lanka's biggest military offensive, which is aimed at dominating the sprawling Jaffna Peninsula and dismantling the LTTE's administrative structures.

Saturday's victory came after the deaths of at least 508 soldiers and 1,925 guerillas in the offensive. Which also left thousands of civilians homeless and prompted a nationwide alert for Tiger revenge attacks.

Chief military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe admitted fighting could continue for some time yet.

"Physically we are not in the town centre yet, but no one can go in and no one can come out," he told AFP. "We have sealed off Jaffna. Clearing the entire place will take a few more days."

Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte, who led the army's decisive drive against the LTTE, said the capture of Jaffna would not be the end of the military drive.

"It will not be the end of the operation," Ratwatte said. "In our quest for peace, this is only a symbol. This is the territory that was not been under our control for over 10 years."

The Defence Ministry said the 16th-century Dutch-built fort, which was razed by the Tigers in 1990 after hundreds of soldiers were evacuated from there following an LTTE siege, was taken after ferocious battles.

The five-pointed star-shaped fort has been a symbol of dominance over Jaffna, the fountain head of a dragging Tamil separatist campaign which has left more than 50,000 people dead over two decades.

The fall of Jaffna shattered the LTTE's image as an invincible guerilla movement, defence analysts said. The

capture of Jaffna would not be the end of the military drive.

LTTE's clandestine radio, Voice of Tigers, has predicted the setback a day earlier.

With the army's stronghold on Jaffna, the estimated 500 Tigers holed up inside have lost their only escape route by boats and could now surrender or commit suicide, Munasinghe said.

LTTE guerillas carry cyanide pills to bite to escape being taken alive.

The fort's capture gave a dramatic twist to the military offensive, which had been considerably slowed down in recent days by the LTTE, which extensively mined the area and rigged Jaffna buildings with booby traps.

The battle of Jaffna involving 15,000 government soldiers became a matter of prestige for President Chandrika Kumaratunga after the LTTE abruptly pulled out of peace talks in April, shattering six months of peace.

— AFP/UNB photo

MQM's strike paralyses Karachi

KARACHI, Dec 3: A strike called by the ethnic Mohajir National Movement (MQM) paralysed much of Pakistan's biggest city Karachi today after militants fired in the air and burned vehicles overnight, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

Hospital and police sources said gunmen killed at least four people in separate shootings on Saturday after the MQM called for a day of mourning in the southern province of Sindh to protest alleged police disruption of an activist's funeral.

Armed youths took to the streets on Saturday night, throwing stones and firing in the air. Fire brigade officials said seven vehicles were set ablaze in different parts of Karachi.

Police and paramilitary rangers in armoured vehicles patrolled trouble spots in the southern port city, where ethnic and sectarian unrest has cost more than 1,730 lives this year.

Diana meets royal aides to discuss her future

LONDON, Dec 3: Princess Diana, estranged wife of heir to the throne Prince Charles, has met royal aides to discuss her future, which she sees as an ambassador of goodwill for Britain Buckingham Palace said, reports Reuter.

The royal establishment offered the loner princess talks after her stunningly open television interview last month where she admitted adultery, branded palace officials as "the enemy," and won applause from the people.

"The meeting was perfectly amicable," a palace spokesman said, adding that Diana, 34, met senior royal household figures this week and there had been no atmosphere of confrontation.

— AFP/UNB photo

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Tax cuts fail to boost popularity of Major govt

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It was Labour's best lead since Major was reelected as Conservative Party leader in July after a sudden showdown with party dissenters who blamed him for their poor showing.

— AFP/UNB photo

European delegation members, from left, Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan, EU President Jacques Santer, Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzales and Spanish Foreign Minister and Javier Solana face the US delegation led by President Bill Clinton (R) and Secretary of State Warren Christopher (2nd R) at the Moncloa Palace in Madrid yesterday during an American-European summit. Both parties signed an accord designed to boost trade and political cooperation.



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Silajdzic welcomes US troops to Bosnia as part of NATO force

SARAJEVO, Dec 3: Bosnia Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic on Saturday welcomed the deployment of US troops to his country as part of a NATO peace implementation force and said he doubted they would sustain casualties, reports Reuter.

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"We have a very solid and stable truce. We would like to translate that truce, that ceasefire into a stable peace. We can do that. We don't want them to fight our wars."

Units of the US Army's first armoured division are expected to begin arriving in

Bosnia within days, a down-payment on about 20,000 US troops being despatched to help implement a peace plan agreed on November 21st.

Silajdzic returned on Saturday from a visit to the United States where he tried to bolster congressional support for sending US troops to Bosnia.

He said one issue on Capitol Hill remains an exit strategy whereby US and other NATO troops are able to leave Bosnia after the year they plan to spend here.

"The issue on the hill is equipment and training. There is a fear that there is no exit strategy, and equipment and training is related to the exit strategy of

course," the prime minister said.

"The sooner the Bosnians are able to defend themselves the sooner the American and other troops be able to withdraw from Bosnia-Herzegovina."

AFP adds from Baumholder, Germany: US President Bill Clinton formally approved on Saturday a NATO plan to deploy troops in Bosnia and paid a special visit here to boost the morale of US units heading for the former Yugoslav republic.

But it remained unclear when the first troops would leave for Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a government official denying earlier reports that advance units would head south imminently.

— AFP/UNB photo

Asian diet — a model for healthy eating

WASHINGTON DC: Traditional Asian foods with moderate consumption of wine, cake and tea represent a model diet, coming from countries with some of the lowest rates of chronic diseases in the world, a group of researchers said Friday, reports AFP.

The researchers, concluding a three-day international conference in San Francisco, unveiled an "Asian pyramid" as a guide to nutrition — an alternative to the pyramid developed by US public health officials.

The diet contains similar health benefits to the so-called "Mediterranean diet" also linked by studies to low rates of heart disease and other ailments.

The Asian pyramid is weighted heavily with rice products, noodles, millet and other grains, with vegetables, legumes and fruits next in importance.

The recommendation also called for optional daily consumption of fish, shell fish or dairy products, eggs and poultry once a week and meat served just once a month.

"The Asian diet as described here represents a cultural model for healthy eating," a conference statement said.

But the statement also warned that traditional Asian diets are in danger because of economic changes.

The statement said black and green tea appear to have health benefits and that wine, beer and other alcoholic beverages consumed in moderation by many in Asia may be a healthy habit.

Researchers from Cornell University and Harvard University participated in the conference, sponsored by old-worlds preservation and exchange trust.

— AFP/UNB photo

Rabin murder was 'a set up' says Amir

TEL AVIV, Dec 3: The confessed assassin of Yitzhak Rabin said in court today that the prime minister's murder was a set up as a judge ordered him held in custody for another four days because of new evidence. "It's all a set up," Yigal Amir, 25, told reporters as he entered the court room, reports AFP.

The right wing Jewish fanatic has admitted to shooting Rabin during a November 4 peace rally in Tel Aviv.

The judge in the Tel Aviv court ordered Amir to be quiet, but the religious law student continued, shouting, "In this country we kill people."

— AFP/UNB photo

Former ROK president Chun sent to jail

SEOUL, Dec 3: Former South Korean president Chun Doo-Hwan was thrown in jail today on charges of heading a 1979 military mutiny, the second former head of state to be detained in under three weeks, reports AFP.

Chun, who ruled South Korea from 1980 to 1988 followed Roh Tae-Woo, who was jailed on November 16 on corruption charges. Chun was arrested in his hometown of Hapchon and whisked by prosecutors in a black Sedan to jail in the southern suburbs of Seoul.

Outside the Anyang prison, the car carrying Chun was mobbed by dozens of angry protesters who shouted "execute the murderer," kicked the car and hurled rocks as it passed through the gates of the high-walled prison compound.

The arrest came one day after the 64-year-old former general rejected a prosecutors' summons for questioning on his role in a 1979 coup, which triggered a bloody civil uprising in the

southern city of Kwangju and left some 200 people dead.

Earlier in Hapchon, about 300 kilometres (180 miles) south of Seoul, investigations scuffled with a dozen hometown supporters when they forced ex-president.

A dozen villagers and relatives yelled behind a police blockade as a grim-looking Chun was escorted into the Sedan.

"If I were a criminal, then Kim Young-Sam himself should also take responsibility for his collusion with rebellious formers," the ex-president said.

Chun, who had spent two years in exile in a remote Buddhist temple to atone for his past, also challenged Kim to explain how the president could punish him after joining forces with him and his successor Roh Tae-Woo to win the 1992 presidential race.

Chun's audacity shocked the ruling camp, adding to the political turmoil created by a massive corruption scandal.

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Off the Record

Sad tale behind their pleasure trip

BONN: Up to 5,000 children under 16 are abused every year by German "sex tourists" Berlin Free University Professor Dieter Kleiber told a symposium Wednesday, reports AFP.

But Kleiber warned that the country's sex tourists should not all be accused of child abuse. He said only about 1.2 per cent of Germany's estimated 300,000 tourists who travelled abroad for sexual experiences had these with children.

Favorite places for German sex tourists are Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Philippines which sent representatives to the symposium in Bonn organised by the German Justice Ministry.

The Minister Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger said German lawmakers must shoulder their responsibility when Germans exploit the social situation in some countries in order to sexually abuse children.

She also called on the authorities in the countries where it happened to cooperate in ensuring successful prosecutions.

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